

They looked for a City
which hath foundations
whose builder and maker
is God. — Heb. 11:10

M. L. J.

The

Megiddo Message

Devoted to the Cause of Christ

FEASTS

PATIENT WAITING

SPARKS

WE HAVE BUT ONE GOAL

LOOK UP!

MUSINGS OF THE EDITOR

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

THE WISDOM OF GOD

Vol. 43, No. 16

August 11, 1956

By Faith Noah being
warned of God of
things not seen as yet
prepared an ark to
save his house
from the water.



All the earth shall
be filled with the
glory of the Lord.



For the increase of his
government and
peace there shall
be no end.



The Kingdom and
dominion shall be
given to the people
of the saints of
the Most High.



John had first preached
before his coming
the baptism of
repentance.



Jesus came into Galilee
preaching the gospel
of the Kingdom
of God.

MARK 1:14

This Jesus shall so
come in like manner
as ye have seen him
go into heaven.



Therefore they that
were scattered
abroad went everywhere
preaching the
Word.



The City had no head
nor the Sun. Neither of
the Moon. For the glory
of God did
brighten it.



While the
Bridegroom tarried
they all slumbered
and slept.



At midnight there
was a cry made.
Behold the
bridegroom
cometh.



I will
send you
Elijah
the prophet
before the
coming of the great
and dreadful
day of the Lord.

Mal. 4:5



The Megiddo Message

Vol. 43, No. 16

August 11, 1956

Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone, THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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SERIES:

Types and Shadows in the Mosaic Law

Part Six

FEASTS

Coming Events Cast Their Shadow Before

THE greater, the grander, the more towering the event, the farther it casts its shadow. Shadows of stupendous events in earth's future extend far back across the centuries, through millenniums of time. They could be clearly distinguished in that epoch in the ancient past when Israel was a nation. By looking long and intently and reverently at the shadow, we today, discover with a great new joy more about certain principal events in the magnificent future which God has planned for us.

Inspired writers recognized the Mosaic Law as "a shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1), and in no phase of the Law is the pattern of those future "good things" more apparent nor more inspirational than in the laws which governed Israel's feast days.

The yearly cycle in the life of the Israelitish nation was punctuated with numerous feasts, among which there were three of particular prominence: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These feasts were highly significant in character and in the order of their observance.

The Hebrews were an agricultural people, and their prescribed feasts were of an agricultural nature, marking the beginning and the end of their harvest seasons. At that time they brought of the fruits of the field to offer to the Lord. The fruit of the land was made a symbol of the choice fruits of the earth which God shall gather unto life eternal; and the ancient harvest festivals were instituted as types of the harvest of souls at the ends of the ages.

First in order was THE PASSOVER. It commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt and marked also the beginning of the grain harvest. Israel's Exodus from Egypt was a type of a greater spiritual emancipation which has been wrought for the people of God. Throughout the Scriptures, Egypt is used figuratively to signify the land of spiritual darkness (Rev. 11:8; Isa. 30:1, 2). No harvest for God can be produced in that place of bondage. Men and women who wish to offer their lives unto Him as matured and well-ripened sheaves, must first forsake Egypt. Then the harvest can begin.

.

The grain harvest in Palestine continued from Passover (April) until PENTECOST (June), when the whole populace came with rejoicing unto Jerusalem, bringing their sheaves to offer unto the Lord. Pentecost marked the end of the first harvest. This festival as instituted in the Mosaic Law presents to the mind's eye a vivid and beautiful picture. There was the gathering of happy reapers, their arms laden with golden sheaves. But this simply foreshadowed in dim outline the real event which belonged to the prophetic future. John envisioned the an-

typical first harvest, the auspicious event of the ages at Christ's return. Then shall be realized the hopes and fears of all the years when precious wheat is gathered into the granary, and worthless tares are bound in bundles to be destroyed.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud; and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" (Rev. 14:14-16).

The fruitage of this harvest numbers 144,000 faithful. They are "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (vs. 1-5). Who can dimly picture, or faintly realize, the rejoicing, the supreme ecstasy that will give wings to the feet and pæans of praise to the lips of the saints as they gather together in one grand company to offer unto the Lord the harvest of their lifelong labors; not the fruit of the earth but the fruit of holiness which springs from the soil of virtuous hearts!

"They are without fault before the throne of God" (v. 5).

What a gathering of the faithful that will be, grandest of all meetings, fondest of greetings, when all from righteous Abel down to the last member to form a part of Christ's body in this age, are harvested unto life eternal!

This is the coming stupendous event which casts its shadow before. The harvest at the end of Gentile times was made discernible to Israel in their Pentecost festival several millenniums in the past. Furthermore, the coming event was *italicized* in the sight of the nation by the regular annual observance of the feast which their law enjoined.

The Day of Pentecost as observed by Israel was marked by a liberal spirit toward the Levites, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Deut. 16:11-14); Those who had not produced the harvest shared in the yield. And so in the age to come, the nations, who have had no part in preparing the harvest, who have not experienced the careful planting, the earnest watering, the long and tedious years of waiting for seeds of truth to mature, shall nevertheless share in the bountiful blessings which shall overflow to them when the harvest is reaped. The reaping of the firstfruits shall result in an age of spiritual prosperity. The present inadequate systems of government shall be displaced by the Kingdom of God, with Christ and the saints reigning upon His throne (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). Under their rulership the nations of earth shall learn righteousness.

"The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying,

Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord" (Zech. 8: 21, 22).

Not only shall nations be led to seek the Lord, but temporal blessings shall flow to all. Conformity to the laws of health shall eliminate sickness, disease, insanity, suffering (Isa. 33: 24). Conformity to the laws of holiness shall bring about peace on earth, and good will among men.

.

After Pentecost, which concluded the grain harvest, the fruits began to ripen. There was the early vintage, then ripening figs and pomegranates, but not until autumn were the great clusters of the vine gathered in. Following this came THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES, third and last of Israel's principal feasts. It marked the end of the harvest season, and foreshadowed the last harvest of souls upon this earth.

John the Revelator foresaw this second harvest when, at the end of the Millennium, the faithful from among the mortal nation shall be gathered unto life eternal.

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth" (Rev. 14: 17-19).

Following the Feast of Tabernacles—a seven-day festival during which the whole populace gathered at Jerusalem—there was an Eighth Day of Assembly and final rejoicing before the pilgrims returned to their homes (Lev. 23: 36). A grander Day of Assembly follows the second harvest in the world to come. When the clusters of the vine are fully ripe and the Lord of the harvest has gathered them unto Himself, such rejoicing and loud alleluiahs as this planet has never before witnessed will rend the very heavens and cause the angels from on high to listen with rapt attention. Every inhabitant of this planet will participate in that holy convocation, for everyone who is alive to greet the dawn of that glorious Eighth Day will form a part of the harvest—whether firstfruits or afterfruits—which God has gathered unto eternal life.

In the type, after the Day of Assembly the pilgrims returned home to take up again the cycle of planting and harvesting. In the antitype, men shall live trillions, quadrillions, and countless quintillions of years, and never shall they see the sun set on that wondrous Eighth Day. It is Eternity! The rejoicing, and the assembly, friend with friend, shall be as enduring as the day. Never again, as the weary farmer, must they return to the task of plowing and planting, for their harvest shall have been accepted of God, and as the æons of eternity roll on forever they shall continue to reap the everlasting yields of a righteous life and holy character.

.

Such are the coming stupendous events which cast their shadow before: The harvest of the firstfruits at Christ's return; the harvest of the afterfruits at the end of the Millennium, and the following Eternal Day of Holy Convocation. These events were projected before

Israel in the Pentecost festival at the end of the first harvest, the Feast of Tabernacles at the conclusion of the harvest season, and the happy Eighth Day of Assembly. In order of occurrence, and in the character of the events, type and antitype coincide perfectly.

Though Israel observed these holy feast days year after year, as regularly as the return of the harvest seasons, their true and far-reaching significance did not leave a lasting impression upon the nation as a whole. But the Mosaic Law was a "schoolmaster" (Gal. 3: 24), a teacher, an instructor, and those who longed to share in the better things constantly typified before them, thrilled as they comprehended the lessons which the Law contained. Men and women such as Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb, Deborah, and Samuel, and the Prophets which followed after them, saw with wondrous clearness the shadows of future events contained in the types of the Law.

The lapse of centuries since the institution of that Law places the Christian today close to the reality. After the Mosaic Law was given, the shadows were constantly highlighted and defined by words of the Prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles. And now we stand not in the dim outline but nearly within the limelight of the coming glorious future events. And the shadows which stretch backward across the centuries bear silent but unmistakable witness to the tremendous import of the events which lie just before us now.

.

And if the shadow is glorious, what will the reality be!

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2: 9).

Providence

We acknowledge both Thy power and love
To be exact, transcendent, and divine;
Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,
While all things have their will, yet none but Thine.

For either Thy *command* or Thy *permission*
Lay hands on all: they are Thy right and left:
The first puts on with speed and expedition;
The other curbs sin's stealing pace and theft.

Nothing escapes them both; all must appear
And be disposed and dressed and tuned by Thee,
Who sweetly temperest all. If we could hear
Thy skill and art, what music would it be!

Thou art in small things great, nor small in any;
Thy even praise can neither rise nor fall.
Thou art in all things one, in each thing many;
For Thou art infinite in one and all.

—Selected.

"Christ is preparing us for a place in His spiritual house if we will allow ourselves to be worked upon, so that we shall be one of the stones to go into the temple of the Lord."

Often there is lofty preparation in

Patient Waiting

"**T**RIBULATION worketh patience," says the Apostle. Life rarely runs with any of us exactly as we wish it would. It is not often a broad river, keeping unhindered a quiet course, and at last with measured outflow reaching the ocean of the great future to which we hasten.

Life is often a dashing, boiling, turbid stream; turning frequently on itself, fretted by rocks, broken by falls, or crowded between narrowing banks. Life lived according to the flesh is often a bitter disappointment. The seeds we planted do not yield the harvest we had hoped. Sometimes the crop fails completely. "Just over the shoulder of many a pleasure we discover the menacing face of disappointment."

But life lived according to the plan of the great Life-giver is not a disappointment or a failure. It may be filled with hindrances, interruptions, obstructions, and heart-breaking trials, but Brother Paul, who endured trials and persecutions unknown to anyone in our day and called them "light afflictions," said, "tribulation worketh patience." Tribulation—that is, all these apparently hindering providences, these embarrassments, these interruptions, these discouragements; but tribulation worketh patience—that is, submission to God's will and a determined doing of duty. And patience worketh experience—that is, a larger and truer conception of God's way of dealing with His children. And experience, this ennobled view of the Divine plan, worketh hope—that is, a restful certainty that God will lead things to the wisest and most shining issue.

Let us look at an actual example of just such a providentially hindered, and yet every time providentially helped man. And in the light of this example let us seek to win a little more the Christian grace of patience—that quiet submission to God's will, that steady doing of His commandments, in the face of all obstacles; for in the Christian sense, a patient man is a strong man and a conquering one.

.

Consider David, a mere boy among the sheep. Yet he had been anointed by the Prophet Samuel, out from among his brothers, out from all Israel. David knew well enough the meaning of that ceremony. It was no usual thing for the venerable Prophet thus to call and consecrate. David knew that what the Prophet had done meant kingship. But at present there is neither crown nor kingdom. David is but an anointed shepherd. He is there on the hillsides, doing only what he was doing before the consecrating oil had touched his forehead. He is only feeding sheep and defending them from the prowling bear and lion. He is far enough from the throne to which he has been called.

But an evil spirit possesses Saul the king. Not a literal demon, but rather a bad mood of despondency and brooding, most likely over duties undone, the work of life neglected, the laws of God consciously broken, promises unkept. Such things as these will surely open the gates

for the coming of such an evil spirit into the heart of any man. Such things as these will clash their discords even amid the harmonies of the best palace. And through the more thoughtful hours of King Saul, that wild lawlessness when he dared to do the sacrifice fit only for priestly hands, that avaricious saving of the best of the spoils of the Amalekites and the false excuse for it that it was for God's sake when he knew it was for his own, and the prophecy of doom falling from the lips of Samuel, doubtless haunted the king and thrust their disturbance into every attempted joy.

And so an evil spirit possessed King Saul. There was sought out through all the coasts of Israel a young man who was skilled on the harp. Music might be the medicine for the gloomy king. David was chosen; thus David was introduced at court. He became the favorite of the king.

And surely now the road toward the kingdom is opening for David. At court, the king's chosen friend—David can now certainly begin to see, at least, the first unfoldings of Samuel's prophecy. But David's music charms the evil spirit off. Saul measurably forgets his troubles and regains his cheerfulness. David, like many other court favorites, is forgotten. The use for him is done.

So back to the sheep-feeding and the sheep-guarding. The road toward the kingdom twists strangely. It seems to double on itself. David must learn in God's school the lesson of delay.

It was years afterward—it must have been many years; for David, a boy when he first came to Saul's court, had now so fully grown that Saul no longer recognized him—years afterward, during all which years only the quiet duties of a shepherd had filled his days, David finds the army of the Philistines in rank against the army of the Israelites. It was when Goliath with his massive shield and spear and mountain weight of armor had stood forth for forty days to dare to single combat. Then David with his shepherd's staff and simple shepherd's sling appears as his antagonist. He flings the stone. The aim is true. The giant falls. Israel is triumphant. Once more David is installed in court. He becomes the king's son-in-law. He is commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. He is everywhere successful. He is within one step of the throne. Surely the prophecy of Samuel hastens to its fulfillment. How wide, how smooth the way for David's feet!

But God's thoughts are not David's thoughts, nor are His ways David's ways. The hosts of the Philistines have been put to flight and all Israel rings with David's praises. From throngs of Hebrew maidens sounds the song, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Saul's jealousy is aroused at the success and consequent reputation of David. Now his place at court, his place in Saul's household, his command of the armies—all these things are torn from him. There is the gradually formed belief that David is the man who shall at last possess his throne; there is the determination of Saul to slay him. Then comes the hurried flight; the

warnings of Jonathan; the secreting in the cave of Adullam; the resorts of Engedi; the pursuits and bafflings of Saul; the flight of David and his men to the Philistines; years of torturing anxiety, of precarious livelihood.

And now the last limit of wretchedness is reached, the last and bitterest cup is to be drained. These are David's thoughts; he says in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand." So David went over to the Philistines, and the king of the Philistines gave him a city, Ziklag; and he brought his own wives there, and his followers brought theirs. And in the kingdom of this city there began to come to David and his followers something of rest and peace. But it was of short duration. David and his men are absent from Ziklag on an expedition, and when they return, behold, it is burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters are taken captive. "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep." David was now greatly distressed, for now not only was Saul his enemy, but his own people turned against him, "because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

And now, at last, God's time had come. Henceforth David's trial is substantially done and his reward begins. The burning of Ziklag is the turning point. The prophecy which had waited so many years begins now to blossom into fulfillment. The spoil is recovered from the Amalekites; Saul is shortly slain by the enemy. David goes to Hebron and is made king over Judah, and seven years later all Israel owns his sway. So David was placed under, or rather carried through, tribulation. And David, notwithstanding, in the main held himself to God. In the deepest trial he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He possessed his soul in patience. So did God bring him out at last to victory, into the kingdom, into honor.

.

Now is not David's life an illustration, an example for us? We are often thwarted, often disappointed, often full of sorrow, weighed down with burdens; we are seemingly thrust into the furnace, we are driven into exile. But this is the test of the Christianity of a man—under the pressure of just those burdens, amid the white heat of just that furnace, amid the desolation of just that exile, to believe firmly that God will sustain and in His own good time relieve; to take to one's self these words as of the truest: that God will not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear; that He will lead me out of this dispensation of trial into one of peacefulness and sunshine.

In the light of this example of patience, let us seek to lay hold of certain truths which shall encourage us in this grace of patience.

FIRST: *A man must grow.*

Growing means waiting and struggling toward the end. In the Divine plan no man leaps into place and power. No man attains the stature of the Master at one

bound. Even Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We look at some benignant life, great in worth, throwing its healing and helping shadow across the ways of other lives like a palm amid the desert. We are fired with enthusiasm for holy emulation. Let me live like that, we say. Let the rich fruit hang upon the fruitful boughs and the grateful shadows fall from the thickening verdure of my life. There is the plan of the life before us. I will be like that, we say.

We look at one side—life's completed plan. We forget the other—the minute's work, the first step to the plan's completeness. We are too apt to think we should bound into goodness, and are not willing to walk up to it step by step, minute by minute. Men are like trees in this growth into the Divine image—first germ, then forth-putting, then rising trunk, then spreading branches. And the giant tree, shooting its pinnacles of green far into the sky, is only the result of the more minute growths of the days and months and years.

David at Ziklag, where his destiny turned; at Hebron, at Jerusalem, where he wielded his scepter and wore his crown, was a very different person from David the shepherd boy on the hillsides, or from David fingering his harp before the moody Saul. We must be patient for our growth. We must encourage ourselves in the Lord.

SECOND: *Varied experiences are needful for the up-building of a man, not only sunshine and calm and day, but shade, storm, and darkness.*

Men grow by trial as trees grow by tempest. The compacted purpose, the unflinching resolution, the real estimate of a merely outward possession compared with an interior integrity, of time compared with eternity, all clear-eyed estimates of these high matters come from trial. Sin in the human heart, righteousness in the heart—from these two opposites, trial inevitably follows; trial, that is, cutting away of sin for the liberty and growth of righteousness.

And it sometimes seems to us as though God's entire dispensation toward us were one of trial; as though the night were vastly longer than the day, the tempest than the calm. There are times in some lives when trials pile themselves mountain high. New darkness succeeds darkness; fresh disappointment treads upon the heels of disappointment; burden is laid above burden; the light almost seems to die out from the sky, hope from the heart; there is such an accumulated wretchedness that it seems as though the back of endurance must break. But wait, be patient!

If the night did not wrap the tree with its gloom and damp; if the tempest did not stiffen and try its fibers; if there were always stillness and sunshine around it, there would be no tree. Character is a growth, and trial is an essential means of growth. If we value truth and purity and nobleness; if we would have them ours, then must we be tried, then must we endure tribulation. How thoroughly David was tried! through what years of exile and persecution and disappointment was he carried! Yet through all this time David's character was growing; God's hand was fashioning him for his destiny. Be patient, therefore. Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. He has meaning in your trial.

THIRD: *There is Divine and precise adjustment in all our trials.*

Knowing the story of David as we do, knowing the

disorganized state of the kingdom when he received it, knowing the wars he had to wage during his whole reign, can we conceive a better method of discipline than just that through which God led him? It took a great deal of costly training to transform the shepherd boy into the king. He would not have been the king he was had he missed this training. God knew his need.

We are training for a higher kingship, a loftier empire—to become kings and priests to reign with Jesus on this earth when His power has conquered the unrighteous kingdoms of men. God knows just the discipline we need to prepare us for such a high station. "Every man according to his several ability." The greater the ability, the greater the trial and the sterner the discipline. Our cross is the lightest one God can lay upon us consistently with His magnificent design for every one of us.

Let no Christian think he shall escape trials and persecutions in this world. The haven of rest lies not adown a placid river, but beyond a stormy sea. But amid the billows of temptation and affliction never bewail nor magnify the hardships. Think of the crown, not the cross. Remember that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." If the way of escape does not immediately appear, be patient. God is faithful. When we are sufficiently refined, deliverance will be ready at hand.

The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, not through protection and shielding from the rough winds of adversity. Are we better than He? Truth has been compared to the anvil upon which the hammers of criticism are constantly being broken and worn out. If the truth is in us and we in it, we become a part of the anvil and cannot fail to feel the vicious blows of the assaulting hammers. But the qualities which absorb and dissipate the shocks are faith, trust, patience.

If innocent of any wrong doing, the darts of the enemy can never slay us. "Blessed are ye," said our Captain, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely* for my sake." Watch carefully, lest impatience beget rebellion and give the adversary just cause for accusation. Emulate Daniel, whose enemies could find no fault in him except concerning the law of his God. "It is better that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing. . . . For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." To the man reckoned among the saints, the reproach of Christ becomes a badge of honor. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. . . . Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

The powers of evil may rage, but their time is short. Let them do their worst. "The Judge standeth before the door." Help is at hand. It will not be long. The hope of that long sweet rest from all trials will nerve us for the few remaining miles. When a way for action appears, act. When a blank wall confronts us, "stand still and see the salvation of God." Here lies the highest form of patience which the Christian can attain.

"Be ye also patient."

SPARKS

THERE was a three-alarm fire in a large city recently. A huge warehouse was partly consumed. Fire companies from all over the city converged upon the point and extinguished the fire only after considerable effort. Afterward one fire company remained upon the scene to see that the flames would not break out again.

Good precaution! Times without number fire companies have left the scene of a conflagration only to be called back several hours later when the fire flared again with renewed vehemence. It takes only one little spark the size of a pinhead to start a fire that could convert a whole city into flames.

Forest fires, too, are started mostly through neglect of tiny sparks. Careless campers who leave fires without extinguishing them are many times the cause of forest fires, as are also careless smokers. In the reforestation of burned out areas, experienced foresters will always cut down standing charred snags (this, too, is good precaution) before replanting with new seedlings. For these snags are an extreme hazard. Once a fire starts in a new growth, it climbs the dead snags rapidly, then the sparks are spread very easily and quickly by only a light breeze.

Likewise, in the spiritual, it is prudent for us to maintain a keen watch when we think we have overcome an evil habit. Many evils, such as covetousness, jealousy, bitterness, egotism, and deceit, lie hidden deep within the heart, and, like sparks in the natural, may burst into flames before we realize it. Much damage can be done before they are detected. In many cases seemingly strong characters have collapsed because hidden sparks have quietly burned away their supports.

We have not taken the one important step toward putting out the fire if we do not love reproof. The reproof is God's sentinel who stands on guard and raises the fire alarm at times when we may have lapsed into drowsiness. Therefore we should consider reproofs a kindness and receive them with gratitude rather than resentment. Reproofs should be to us a source of encouragement, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"; and we know that character is formed only by hard work and strict discipline.

The fire that would destroy the girders of our character must be thoroughly extinguished. The water of life must be by our side to quench every spark of our own desire. This requires constant vigilance. As we bring the destructive fire under control at one point, we must be careful that we do not relax our vigilance in some other quarter. Every spark of our own way is destructive, and the most insidious sparks do not come in the form of ugly-looking sins, but in the guise of enticing and innocent-appearing thoughts. The sparks, evil thoughts, no matter how small at the beginning, if protected and fanned by our own desires, can become a destructive fire which will undermine the girders of the strongest character.

Temptation is a serious word in the life of a Christian. It indicates the beginning of a possible series of infinite evils. It is the ringing of the alarm bell, which, like the sudden, sharp cry of *Fire!* should stir us to instant-

neous action, and rouse every muscle to its highest tension.

Watchfulness is the keynote of success, and without constant vigilance we shall never achieve our objective. We never outlive its need. An important point to watch is our tongue. "The human tongue is physically small, but what tremendous effects it can boast of! A whole forest can be set ablaze by a tiny spark of fire, and the tongue is as dangerous as any fire, with vast potentialities for evil. It can poison the whole body, it can make the whole of life a blazing hell" (James 3: 5, 6, Phillips).

One of our big difficulties in putting out the fire is that we do not give enough time to it. We do not realize that it is a continual work throughout our whole life. We may do something wrong today, and think, "I will watch and not do that again." But we forget the possibility of some little spark remaining alive. Being insensible to that danger, we do not keep the fire hose of Divine Law close at hand. Thus when the same trial confronts us later, it stirs to fresh activity that one unquenched spark. Swiftly the wicked thought flares into unkind words and uncharitable actions. It is high time to stop thinking that the fire of iniquity is extinguished when it is still smoldering, lest some little spark re-kindle the fire and prove our ruin.

What are we doing, and how hard are we doing it? Are we really devoting all our effort to the task of overcoming these spontaneous emotions which, if allowed to remain, will eventually cause our destruction? Are we waiting until the temptation confronts us, or are we looking ahead to anticipate any eventualities and provide for protection against them? It is better to *prevent* than to *repent*.

Sparks of sin are dangerous and if spiritual caution is exercised in our lives their appearance will alert us to the danger. We have access to a highly effective sprinkler system, the water of life by the Apostles, Prophets, and Jesus. The pressure responds to the turn of a key and will readily wet the embers before they do permanent damage or that which requires costly and time-consuming repair to our spiritual building.

We Have but One Goal

WHAT does life mean to us? Since life has been granted to us, what are we going to do with it? Humankind is much like a great river flowing endlessly through the world, on and out into oblivion. They are born, they eat, they breathe, sleep, suffer, enjoy, grow old, and die. Is this the best God has to offer?

Those who have taken the time and trouble to seek the Lord know that God has promised far more than this meager share of life to all who will put forth the necessary labor to become worthy of it. He has promised unending life as Kings and Priests in a Kingdom on this earth renewed to such beauty and glory that mortal minds have never dreamed of its perfection; a world where death shall be unknown, sickness unheard of, pain never experienced, worry and sorrow forgotten, while peace and pleasure increase age after age. This, then, is our goal. Is any other worth considering?

Certainly it is hard to understand how anyone could

think of accepting an objective of any less value than this. Yet how often we find ourselves doing just that: selling our glorious birthright for a mess of pottage; giving back the beauty, and choosing ashes!

Like a child who delights in a bright balloon, we instinctively reach for the things of here and now. They look so nice. But the beautiful balloon will surely burst, sooner or later, as balloons always do, and we shall be left gazing in dismay at the twisted fragments of our folly.

We must consider the final end of the matter and never let the carnal mind divert our attention from the one perfect goal we have set our heart upon. To reach it will require the supreme effort of every fiber of our being. It will take labor and endurance and constant vigilance to habitually direct all our powers toward that one objective. Temptation will assert itself in a thousand different forms; it will subtly and convincingly attempt to draw our hearts toward other and lesser purposes.

Jesus warned that the cares and pleasures of this life would so divert our thoughts and energies from serving God that many would fail to attain the prize. In busy lives like ours there is much work to be done, but often we pursue our temporal duties and worries so diligently that we forget that we have but *"one goal."* In today's world the desire for nice "things" can so easily become the dominant center of our attentions. Everywhere we turn our eyes and ears we are urged to satisfy this vain craving, and it will take a mighty strength to hold fast our aim for that *"one goal."* In a world as materially advanced as ours, a vast selection of pleasures is offered for our consideration; but with our desires riveted upon that *"one goal,"* we can remember that, while others must get all the pleasure they can out of life (for they shall soon pass away to be no more), we have all eternity in which to enjoy ourselves; so we can afford to spend this part of our life in something more worthwhile.

Jesus told the story of a man who found something that he wanted more than anything else in the world—a treasure hid in a field—and for joy he went and sold everything he had and bought that field. His mind was on that one objective and immediately everything else became subservient to that end. The treasure was worth more to him than everything else he possessed. And if we would possess that treasure, the one thing we desire above all else, nothing will be able to draw us away from our purpose. Pride will be powerless to sway us, for good looks is not the goal we seek. The praise of man will not move us, for the esteem of those around us is not our goal. Envy will have no effect upon us, for to have great talent or possessions is not our goal. We will be immune to all forms of foolishness, for our goal is not passing pleasure. When things go wrong, when impatience and anger would rise, let us recall that these present circumstances are not our goal. We can walk serenely through the petty trials of *now*, for our goal is *Tomorrow*.

If we are content with this short and unsatisfactory sample of life, let us get the most out of it. But if we want something better, we will say with Paul: "This *one* thing I do: forgetting what is behind me, and straining toward what lies ahead, with my eyes fixed on the goal, I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus."

LOOK UP!

THE story is told of a small boy playing in the streets of Baltimore. He came to the foot of a long ladder and looked up. Hearing the sound of hammers and the voices of workmen far up on the roof above him, his childish curiosity impelled him to climb. He set his little foot on the lower round and his hand on the next; then up he ascended, hand over hand, round after round, till he was so high that a fall would have been likely to result in instant death.

Yet he had not reached the top. He grew tired, and wished that he had not begun to climb. He looked down to see how far he had come, and the great height made him giddy. He began to tremble, and he was fast losing his strength and his hold.

Just then a man, passing along the street below, paused at the foot of the ladder and looked up at the terrified child. "That boy is going to fall!" he cried wildly.

It was the worst thing he could say. His words and the frightened tone in which he spoke them brought the poor child much nearer to falling than he had been before. The little boy thought the ladder swayed to and fro like trees bent by the storm. He thought the house and the whole street were rocking like ships on the sea.

But all at once he heard another voice, loud, cheery, and full of courage, from the roof above him,

"Boy, look up!"

He did look up. Anybody would have done so, upon hearing such a hearty voice as that.

"All right now. Come on!"

The boy no longer felt giddy. He began to climb, and soon he reached the hand of the sensible carpenter on the roof, whose cheery word had saved him from being dashed to the pavement below.

That boy grew into a man of genius and culture. His written thoughts went all over America and stirred strong emotions in thousands of hearts. But to the day of his death he never failed to attribute the preservation of his life and the accomplishment of all that he ever did in the world to the timely and encouraging words of the carpenter on the roof:

"Look up! Come on!"

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There are many weary climbers who stand trembling and fearful on the steep ladder leading to life. They have made the mistake of pausing to look backward, and have grown discouraged and disheartened. It could be fatal to fall, and yet there remains much more climbing to do before they reach a place of rest.

An observer says, "He will never make anything of himself; that man will never succeed! He will certainly fail!"

This is the moment when the climber needs to hear the kindly and cheering voice from above, commanding, "Look up!"

Looking up, he may see a strong helper bending down to take him by the hand. If he will only look up and see the face, with renewed courage he will climb till he reaches the heights.

It is safe to climb. It is destruction to stop and look back. Oh, ye halting and weary, ye fearful and faint-

hearted climbers, all above you is calm and steady, though the earth reels and shakes beneath your feet! Look up and keep on climbing, and you will soon see a Divine hand reaching out to help you.

Ye giddy and thoughtless ones, who are carried round and round in the wild whirl of worldly excitement and vanity, look up! Look to the clear, calm heights above you and you will regain a correct view of life. Look up and it will impart strength and peace to your soul, above all that the blinding and bewildering pleasures of earth ever gave.

We can afford to have all our worldly expectations cut off, if such disappointment shall lead us to set our hearts upon the blessed Land to where the storm never drifts and where the sun never goes down.

Musings of the Editor

WHEN we think of lip service, our attention may be directed to the hypocritical scribe or Pharisee, or our vision may be focused on the pomp and show of the so-called great and high ecclesiastical dignitaries of this and other days. But today we ask for a deeper searching of our own hearts, lest we go down in the stormy night because our righteousness did not exceed the righteousness of those who profess to know God but in works deny Him. We have all been guilty of lip service. It is so easy to

Lip Service say and do not. It is so easy to promise and not fulfill. It is easy to vow and pay not. It is easy to say, "Lord, Lord," and do not the things He has commanded. The lips may be moving but the heart is hard. The tongue may be singing but there is no music in the soul. A man will never get springtime in his soul until his religion goes deeper than his lips. "Oh, why, why," said our Master, "do you persist in calling me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things I command?"

Brethren, that is striking close home. We have all used the polishing rag too often to polish the outside of the platter, and left underneath filth and dirt. We have all tried to make our lamps burn when there was no oil. Moffatt's translation, in describing the Pharisee, reads, "they talk but do not act."

We sing,

"Our hearts now obey our lips while they say,
'We have loved Thee, O Lord, with the few.'"

This is the very service God demands: the lips and the heart working in perfect combination.

Our lips speak of the glorious majesty of His Kingdom, but what is our service in preparing ourselves and others for that great Event? With our mouth we make claim to the old time religion, but is our service such that men can see and behold that we are real contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints?

Business men tell us today that people want service. If they do not get it, they will go somewhere else. The service must be speedy. That means action. Lip service will never fill the bill, but too often that is the type of service we attempt to palm off on God. But let us remember that He "is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed."

Meditations

On the Word

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Proverbs 31: 26).

A once-famous movie actor, playing the hero in a certain performance, spoke these words: "We are the only animals given human speech—and here we are snarling at each other!" These few words express the world-wide behavior of man with man. The nations, while in a state of unprecedented material attainment that could bring luxury to the entire population, are in a state of suspicion and fear because kindness one to another is lacking and angry words abound. All the way from the top-level government circles down through every organization and society, to the humblest home, angry words ruin many a friendship and create untold hardships for all concerned. Whatever other means may be required to create ideal world conditions, one lesson will have to be learned by all, and that is "the art of being kind."

Kindness is one of the outstanding virtues of the Church of Christ, typified in our text as the virtuous woman. The Old and New Testaments abound with promises of blessings from God upon the kind, the tender-hearted, the patient. There are promises of eternal felicity and the highest good for those who possess these noble virtues. But no such promises or consolation are to be found for the high-minded, the sour-tempered, the quarrelsome and the self-asserting.

Now, if we who claim to follow the Master are come to manhood and are yet lacking in kindness; if we have not developed that gentle, humble, affable, and complying heart; if the proud, self-willed, obstinate, and despotic heart is still within us—how will it all end? and when? and where? We cannot be content, surely, to go on indefinitely with an uncontrolled temper, making ourselves and all who have dealings with us miserable. If we are hardening our hearts against God's entreaties and are inconsiderate of our fellow men, if we spurn the words of love which can make us change our hearts, what is there elsewhere, through life or at the point of life's limit, to give us a new heart?

Remember the words of the Preacher: "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccl. 11:3); also Jesus' closing words: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still . . ." (Rev. 22:11).

Unless we are extremely blind to our own condition we can know how it is with us. Amid scenes of misery caused by our own uncontrolled temper our own conscience tells us, "Thou art the man." What are we doing to alter this condition? or, are we doing anything?

If we have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to us as to children, then let us turn and read again those words by the holy men of old. The Prophet Ezekiel's words are plain: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a

new spirit: for why will ye die?" (Ezekiel 18:30, 31).

Read the Psalms and note the stress that is placed upon the necessity of having a broken and a contrite heart, a clean heart, free from the defilements of sin. It is the only sacrifice acceptable to God. And concerning our spells of bitterness we must admit with the singer of old, "When my heart was sour, when I felt sore, I was a dull, stupid creature, no better than the brute before thee" (Ps. 73:21, 22, Moffatt).

The New Testament abounds with exhortations to kindness. Paul's words to the Ephesians are especially impressive. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another . . ." Everyone should "burn" these words into his memory so they will never be effaced, for unkindness and bitterness may flourish within our hearts though not openly manifested. Misunderstandings arise, men become intolerant, slander and false reports—often based on suspicions and evil imaginations—are started and spread. It is so much easier to destroy the first feeling of bitterness than it is to dig up roots which have taken a firm hold.

You may ask, as did Epictetus centuries ago: "How shall a man like me ever become of an affectionate and compassionate temper? . . . of a truly noble and divine disposition?" He answers in this way:

"Every man is improved by the corresponding acts. The carpenter is improved by the acts of carpentry. And the orator is improved by the acts of oratory. But if the carpenter slovens over his work he will never become a good carpenter. And if an orator does not speak better every time he rises to his feet he will soon be hissed out of the pulpit. And in religion and morals it is the same very thing. Thus, modest actions preserve and improve the already modest man, and immodest actions destroy him. Shamelessness strengthens the shameless man, faithlessness the faithless man, abusive words the abusive man, angry words and angry acts make the man more and more a man of anger, and avaricious acts end in making a man a miser."

He continued on another occasion: "Every habit and faculty is maintained and increased by the corresponding actions. The habit of walking by walking, and the habit of running by running. If you would be a good reader, read; if a good writer, write. Lie down ten days and then attempt a long walk, and you will see how your power of walking has gone from you. Generally, then, if you would make anything a part of your character, practice it."

"When you have been again angry today, you have not only been angry today but you are all the more open to anger tomorrow. Till today's anger, and tomorrow's anger, and the next day's anger, will all unite to make you an absolute savage to all who live near you. But if you wish not to be such a savage, do not do the acts of a savage, but the acts of a gentleman. Do not feed your savage temper by savage words and savage actions. Keep your bad temper in hand, till you can count the days on which you have not been angry. I used to be in a passion every day at something or somebody, now every second day, then every third, then every fourth day. But if you have intermitted thirty days without an explosion of anger, make thanksgiving sacrifice to God. If you escape for two or three months, be assured that you are in a very good way. Great is the combat, divine is the work; it is for freedom, it is for happiness, it is for holiness. Remember God, and go on."

Your Questions Answered



BIBLICAL

PERSONAL

CURRENT

Do you have a question? Personal replies will be sent to Biblical questions to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

Seeing all the fears, distress and chaos in the world, do you still consider that God has any plan for the earth or purpose for humanity?

God certainly does have a plan, and in His own time He will bring it to a glorious climax. Many centuries ago He declared, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14: 21). He did not create this earth in vain, but formed it to be inhabited with a people that shall know and do His will (Isa. 45: 18; Hab. 2: 14). It is His purpose to have His will done here on earth as it is done in heaven.

The present distresses are a result of man's own misrule and sinfulness. God does not interfere, because this is not yet His time to act. He is waiting for the completion of His church, and when all members are fully developed He will begin the consummation of His plan, which will be the establishment of His Kingdom on earth with Jesus as King.

His plan is clearly outlined in His Word, and fulfilled prophecies are an evidence that His promises are true.

What is the Holy Spirit?

It is a mistake to think of the Holy Spirit as a person, a member of a pagan "Trinity." It is simply the power of God, manifested in various ways and through various persons in times past, now in abeyance and to be restored at the coming of the Prophet Elijah. It is as impersonal as the authority of our President, or any executive.

A special outpouring of Holy Spirit power on the Day of Pentecost enabled the recipients to perform miracles—speak in tongues, heal the sick, raise the dead, etc. The power to perform such wonders lent authority to the Gospel message. Also that power was used to confirm new divine revelations (Heb. 2: 1—4). Further, it was by means of Holy Spirit power that the writers of the Bible foretold future events with the same accuracy with which they recorded historical facts.

The Bible says, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22: 14), which I accept as factual. This would indicate, however, that there will be many *almost* good enough to be saved. Now then: Must I go to hell among a lot of criminals just because I was not *quite* good enough to go to Heaven?

First: the "many" proves that not *all* or the whole world is called, but signifies 100,000,000 who make a covenant to serve God and therefore are called to Judgment (Dan. 7: 10). The "few" are the 144,000 chosen because, having overcome all sin, they are faultless (Rev. 14: 1, 5).

Second: the hell taught in the Scriptures is the grave. The Hebrew, *sheol*, and the Greek, *hades*, signify "the nether world" (Hos. 13: 14; I Cor. 15: 55). See our publication, *The Devil and Hell of the Bible*. No one goes to Heaven for his reward. The righteous, for their reward, shall remain on earth, made like to Heaven (Matt. 5: 5; Prov. 2: 21, 22).

True, there will be some who fail to finish the work. Provision is made for them. They also shall be rewarded, every man "according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:

12). Partial work will merit partial reward during the thousand years. God is a good Paymaster and will grant to members of this class many years of happy, mortal life during the Millennial reign of Christ and the saints. But into the Eternity beyond they cannot pass, for their works were not perfect before God, and God cannot perpetuate eternally any imperfect object.

Hope of the full reward, endless life on this earth made new, should be incentive sufficient to impel men and women to pay the full price—perfection of character—which is but our "reasonable service."

Some people use First Thessalonians 4: 17 to prove that we go to heaven, because it says that we shall be "caught up . . . in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Is this true?

To be caught up in the air does not signify going to Heaven, any more than that aircraft which flies many thousands of feet in the air goes to Heaven. Paul's words here indicate a meeting of Christ's servants with their Lord in the air. Following that meeting, the Prophet Zechariah records that Christ shall return to earth in company with "the saints" (14: 4, 5). Sometime between the meeting in the air and Christ's return to earth with "the saints," the Judgment necessarily takes place, for at His return "the saints" shall have been so classified and made immortal.

What happens to the wicked when they die? What happens to the good when they rest from their labors?

All go to the grave, to a sleep which has no dreaming or consciousness (Psalm 146: 3, 4; Eccl. 9: 5, 10; I Thess. 4: 13). Alike and equal in death they lie, except that the covenant makers shall be called back to life for judgment, and reward or punishment. Dan. 12: 2; II Tim. 4: 1; II Cor. 5: 10. Those who have never known God or agreed to serve Him shall be mercifully permitted to sleep on eternally, as though they had not been (Jer. 51: 57; Obad. 1: 16; Psalm 49: 12, 14, 20).

Please explain Job 42: 5. Surely Job did not actually see the Almighty, as it would appear from the text.

You are correct. "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1: 18). To "see," meaning to perceive with the mind, is a common expression. Paul mentions "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1: 18); and Jesus spoke of those who, having eyes, see not, and ears, hear not (Mark 8: 18; Matt. 13: 13—15). They failed to receive or open their understanding to see the truth, God's wonderful plan and purpose.

In the preceding chapter, God had been opening Job's understanding to His mighty power. In chapter 42: 5 Job has become humbled and understands with deeper personal insight that God is almighty and he but little, and declares his lowly repentance (v. 6).

Are we wrong in staying away from the church we once attended because we see they are not teaching truth?

It is better to sit as "a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Ps. 102: 7), than to lend countenance by one's presence to any gathering where true Bible doctrine is not taught.

Shall the earth be burned up, or shall it stand forever?

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever" (Eccl. 1: 4).

THE WISDOM OF GOD

Proverbs 3:13-17

The Wisdom of God is more precious than gold.
The truths that the pages of Scripture unfold
Are valued above heaps of silver, piled high,
Or diamonds, though in wild profusion they lie.
Of rubies, or emeralds, though the supply
Be ever so ample, their sum cannot vie
In providing the values we find in the Word—
They cannot compare with a "Thus saith the Lord."

The Wisdom of God that divulges the plan
For this little ball, and the creature called "man,"
In doing the same sheds a wonderful light
That brightens the corners, and scatters the night.
The paths that were hidden His Wisdom makes plain,
And through it our losses are turned into gain,
As we catch a view of the heavenly plan
And find that God's thoughts are above those of man. ¹

The Wisdom of God is a furnisher sure,
A guide for the Christian who hopes to endure;
A compass and chart to the tempest-tossed soul
Who would resign all to the Captain's control.
It gives every rule that's essential to life;
It gives lasting joy, and delivers from strife.
It furnishes comfort in seasons of grief,
And for pressing cares gives a balm of relief.

For those who are lost in the woods of despair,
The Wisdom of God even seeks for them there,
And flashes a beacon, a bright, shining light,
That, if they but heed it, will lead them aright.
And those who are sick to the soles of their feet, ²
Left wounded and bruised by the "friends" that they meet, ³
Will find there a healing that's rapid, and sure,
A guaranteed medicine, healthful, and pure.

God's Wisdom still offers the choicest of meat ⁴
For those who are hungry, with nothing to eat
But husks that the world in delusion will choose.
Such *fodder* the wise quickly learn to refuse.
The Wisdom of God is food fit for a king;
Its praises His children will constantly sing.
In fact, all who eat and digest it will be
Kings and Priests with our Lord, when His person they
see. ⁵

O wonderful Wisdom, the Wisdom divine!
As high as the stars that eternally shine,
Giving riches and honor, and life without end
To each one who will to its precepts attend.
What comfort goes with the assurance, "God saith"!
A bulwark in life, and a solace in death.
A shield and a helmet; a staff, and a rod,
Are found in this Wisdom, the WISDOM of GOD.
L. L. S.—

1. Isa. 55:9; 2. Isa. 1:6; 3. Zech. 13:6; Luke 10:30, 32;
4. John 4:34; 6:27; 5. Rev. 5:10.